

# **SAN JOAQUIN RIVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ADVISORY COUNCIL**

## **MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

June 25, 2003  
Stanislaus County Agricultural Center  
Modesto, California

### **Welcome and Introductions**

The San Joaquin River Management Program Advisory Council met at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center in Modesto, California. There were no comments on the draft minutes of the March 14, 2003 meeting. Draft minutes from the most recent meeting and pertinent documents are posted on the SJRMP website at:

<http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sjd/sjrm/index.html>

Tim Ramirez, Resources Agency, updated the group on the newly elected public members of the California Bay-Delta Authority, the new state agency, to oversee CALFED. August 14, 2003 is the first scheduled meeting for the new agency.

<http://calwater.ca.gov/>

Ernie Taylor, DWR, announced that there will be a Congressional Hearing - Saturday, June 28th 9:00 am at the International Agri-Center, Tulare. The focus of the hearing will be on the future of California's water supply and the CALFED program's reauthorization. Bob Jennings, District Director for Congressman Nunes, indicated that there will be a pre-hearing opportunity for public input from 8:15 to 8:45 am.

### **Letter of Support Review Process**

Ramirez has suggested a change in the letter of support review process. The new process would post the proposals and draft letters of support on the SJRMP website. SJRMP members are encouraged to review the documents and send comments to either Amanda Peisch [apeisch@water.ca.gov](mailto:apeisch@water.ca.gov) (559) 230-3307 or Ernie Taylor [etaylor@water.ca.gov](mailto:etaylor@water.ca.gov) (559) 230-3352. The draft letters will be revised to include any comments and will be approved after being on the website for the designated time.

Mike McElhiney, USDA, reminded the group that the project should be consistent with the SJRMP plan. McElhiney also wanted to know how to reach other watershed groups that would benefit from SJRMP support. Ramirez suggested that outreach could include magazines, newsletters, or other organizations email lists. We would like to hear some ideas or suggestions of how to outreach to

other groups. At this time it is up to the participants in the SJRMP meetings to get other groups involved or informed.

SJRMP members wanted to know who was going to make the determination if the proposals are consistent with the 1995 SJRMP Management Plan and who was going to post the draft letters. Ramirez determined that Ernie Taylor, Amanda Peisch, and he were going to draft the letters of support so that the SJRMP members could make suggestions for final approval before submitting.

### **Current (and previous) Requests for Letters of Support**

Before the group received the presentations for current Letters of Support, Ramirez mentioned the letter for the Bobcat Flat project has been finalized and will be delivered to Allison Boucher of Friends of the Tuolumne. Full proposal can be viewed on the SJRMP website.

#### Merced River Proposals

Teri Murrison and other Merced River participants, representing the East Merced Resource Conservation District and the Merced River Stakeholders, presented Bay-Delta Authority Proposition 13 concept proposals seeking letters of support from SJRMP. The proposals submitted by this group included:

- Building a Sustainable Upper Merced River Watershed Organization
- Merced River Alliance for a Coordinated Watershed, Citizen Monitoring, and Education Program
- Proposal for Bank Stabilization Feasibility Assessment, Demonstration Project, and Landowner Outreach on the Lower Merced River
- Proposal for Baseline Biological monitoring on the Merced River
- Central Valley Training for BMP Related Permit Coordination in Priority Watersheds.

#### Questions and Comments for Merced River Presentations

Alex Hildebrand mentioned that it was not clear how the permit coordination project will translate to other areas in the region. Additionally he was concerned that changes in river management brought about by bank stabilization projects could change the flow regime, reducing flood attenuation. The response from Merced presenters was that the study will determine the best bank stabilization and management methods for each location and that vegetation can attenuate flows and reduce sediment loading. The group discussion that followed included concerns about the lack of institutional knowledge on bank stability, feasibility of different types of bank management, rock vs. vegetation methods, and the long-term time and maintenance needed for such a project. Hildebrand had an additional concern about the affect of sediment loads on downstream landowners should a bank failure occur.

## Tuolumne River Proposal

### *Floodway Expansion and Greenbelt Protection, Tuolumne River*

Patrick Koepele, Tuolumne River Preservation Trust, presented the concept proposal for the Tuolumne River Floodway Expansion and Greenbelt Protection project. The floodway expansion and greenbelt protection project is part of a broader project to enable the lower Tuolumne River to convey higher flows and provide multiple benefits for salmon and other aquatic and riparian habitat as well as flood management, public access, and recreation. The proposal builds on existing projects that focus on enlarging the floodplain and provide additional habitat. The Trust is requesting funding for the acquisition of properties within the sand-bedded reaches of the Tuolumne River to continue expanding the floodway and protecting the river greenbelt by connecting existing riparian corridors and stopping and/or reversing urban and agricultural encroachment. The goal is to protect restoration and habitat, increase local activities that improve habitat and CALFED watershed stewardship, and increase flood protection. All land that are the focus of the project are flood prone lands.

### **Water Quality Study on the Tuolumne, Stanislaus, and Merced Watersheds and Farmington and East Valley Floor Drainage Areas**

Catherine Graham, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, updated SJRMP on the Rotational Intensive Basin Monitoring Program (IBP); a part of the Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) initiated July 2000. The goals of SWAMP are to evaluate the overall health of surface waters, and to provide a defensible listing and delisting of 303(d) water bodies in California. Summaries of these findings are reported to the State Legislature. Other SWAMP programs underway in the San Joaquin River (SJR) Basin include the: Selenium/Salt/Boron Program, Real Time Monitoring Program, Main Stem SJR, Drainage Basin Inflows to the SJR, Baseline for Future Urban Creeks, and IBP.

The objective of IBP is to conduct a more thorough evaluation of the surface water quality within one of five tributary watersheds, once every five years on a rotational basis. The San Joaquin River region is divided into five watersheds: Northeast Basins, SJR Delta, Eastside Basins, Northwest Side, Grasslands, and Southeast Basins. Each year approximately twenty sampling sites, representing different aspects (such as land use) of a watershed, are monitored in one of the basins. The typical parameters that are measured (as funding permits) include: bi-weekly electrical conductivity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, bacteria, total suspended solids (at selected sites), and total organic carbon; monthly nutrients, minerals, and trace elements; quarterly toxicity; seasonal pesticides and storm water run off; and annual bioassessment and sediment surveys. The IBP started in January 2002 in the Cosumnes, Mokelumne and Calaveras Watersheds.

The RWQCB is currently monitoring the Eastside Basins; comprised of the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced River Watersheds and the Farmington and Valley Flood Drainages. RWQCB will monitor until December 2003 and will present the draft initial findings March 2004. Monitoring sites are chosen based on known concerns such as land practices, lakes, and local stakeholder input. The RWQCB is still accepting public comments regarding the locations of the monitoring sites.

## **Environmental Water Program**

Campbell Ingram, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, presented an overview of the Environmental Water Program (EWP). The purpose of EWP is to acquire water on streams tributary to the Sacramento and San Joaquin River systems to assist in carrying out the flow related goals of the CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan (ERPP). The objectives are to improve salmon spawning and juvenile survival, restore critical instream and channel-forming flows, and provide flows and habitat conditions for fish protection and recovery.

The initial step in implementation are pilot water acquisitions. The goal is to acquire water in support of the ERP to increase instream flows to provide significant biological and ecological benefits, improve the state of scientific knowledge related to the effects of instream flows, and gain knowledge regarding the institutional and social constraints facing environmental water acquisitions. The guiding principles for pilot water acquisitions: conducted on a willing seller basis; proposals will be developed by local interests and ERP Implementing Agencies; acquisitions will be designed to test hypotheses regarding water management in a manner that facilitates learning through adaptive management, and will include appropriate monitoring and peer review by an external scientific panel prior to approval.

The current stream prioritization is: Clear Creek, Mill Creek, Deer Creek, Butte Creek, and Tuolumne River. These streams have been selected because they have active groups focused on watershed protection and existing investments made by the CALFED Bay-Delta Program and the Central Valley Project Improvement Act,. Additionally, these streams are used by significant numbers of anadromous fish species, and have historical biological monitoring data available.

EWP coordinates with government and local programs to ensure they are not working against one another or doubling their efforts. EWP's next steps are to continue outreach in Tier 1 watersheds, to form local teams, and begin developing conceptual proposals. If you would like additional information visit the EWP web site located at [www.CALFEDEWP.org](http://www.CALFEDEWP.org).

Hildebrand expressed concerns about the water supply shift from food production to environmental use. Forecasts predict increasing population and water demands, which may create water shortages. Another question from the group

focused on how much water was needed for the program. Ingram explained that the program could purchase as much as 100,000 ac-ft per year. Ramirez mentioned that the program started 5 years ago to focus on areas where there was significant scientific background and outreach. As the program moves forward we will hear more about it.

### **San Joaquin River Parkway & Conservation Trust Media Update**

Debbie North, of the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, informed SJRMP of the status of the CALFED funded, public education program designed to raise public awareness of the San Joaquin River. Originally entitled “This River is Our River”, through the public opinion poll process, “Our Land. Our River. Our Way of Life.” reached the public better. The goals and objectives of the program are to: develop a creative, non-political, multi-media, multi-cultural outreach program to raise public awareness of the San Joaquin River; improve overall watershed planning and management along San Joaquin River by building local community capacity; and invest in a strategic communications program for the San Joaquin River once, do it well, and save others the effort of “reinventing the wheel”.

The Trust conducted public opinion research, interviewing 800 residents in Fresno and Madera Counties. From their findings, they developed key messages, defined the target audience and came up with a marketing strategy. The outreach methods included paid and earned media along with a web site; [www.ourlandourriver.org](http://www.ourlandourriver.org) (English) and [www.nuestratierrayrio.org](http://www.nuestratierrayrio.org) (Spanish). They are conducting a tracking poll to confirm the audience reached and determine the effectiveness of the messaging.

The results of the polling indicated the public is mainly concerned about the air quality, urban growth, cost of health care, jobs, and the local economy. In general, there is a lack of public awareness about the River. The public believe that the River could be impacted by future growth and that they don't have enough say in how water is distributed. When asked who a credible spokesperson would be for the River, the results in order were farmers, Department of Water Resources, scientists, clergy, and fishermen. Another interesting result was that most people surveyed used the internet to gather information. Three key messages were developed from the polling results and were integrated into a 30 second commercial for radio and TV in English and in Spanish. North explained that the results of this study can be used to create a set of tools for agencies, local governments, and other watershed groups for public outreach efforts.

Hildebrand asked that assuming the public is now aware of the River and the Program and has urged them to do something; how would they go about doing that? North mentioned that the public can learn more by visiting the web site. It is a non-political source of information to help them get involved, point them in the right direction, and get them connected to the River.

## **Other Business**

Ramirez mentioned that based on the questions and concerns expressed today, our next meeting should include: a summary on fish habitat, populations, etc; more about existing water quality monitoring programs like SWAMP; and an open discussion about current monitoring gaps and strategies to generate support for additional monitoring.

**The Next Advisory Council Meeting:** is scheduled on Wednesday, September 10 at 9:00 am at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center.

**ATTENDEES AT  
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM  
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING  
JUNE 25, 2003**

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13	Lydia Miller	San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center	(209) 723-9283	raptorctr@bigvalley.net
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